



Legal Avenues

Your Road to Solutions

Making Your Points Memorable Using Simple Visual Tools



Society has become very visually oriented and attorneys need to capture and maintain the attention of jurors and other audiences using visual tools. There are simple as well as sophisticated ways of doing this.

Infographics

One way to communicate ideas with images and text is to use infographics. Charts and diagrams are common types. These illustrations can make patterns and trends more visible to an audience. For example, an infographic can show the incidence of accidents in a certain stretch of a road.¹ There are several tutorials on YouTube that explain how to create infographics. They include “The Illustator Tutorial: The Five Keys to a Great Infographic.”² There are also free templates for creating infographics on the Hubspot Inbound Marketing page.³

Visual Grammar

Another way to illustrate concepts is “visual grammar.” Creating simple line drawings, including basic stick figures, charts and graphs as the attorney explains situations can clarify complex ideas. Visual grammar can be categorized into six types:

- the portrait shows who and what
- the chart displays numbers and measurements
- the map illustrates location and relationship of items
- the timeline makes clearer what happened when
- the flow chart shows cause and effect
- the visual equation summarizes the event⁴

Visual Examples

Visual images can also be evoked by words when there is no concrete object to present to the audience. The following description is an example of this type of imagery:

There are millions of alveoli in the lungs. These alveoli are necessary for proper breathing. Imagine that all of the alveoli in the plaintiff’s lungs cover a grass football field—one hundred yards. Now imagine that you are standing on the thirty yard line facing the far end of the field. Further imagine that all of the grass from the thirty yard line where you are standing to the far end zone is dead, it’s brown, 70% of the football field. That is why she can barely breathe on her own. Defendant’s toxic gas caused all that unnecessary, permanent damage to plaintiff’s lungs.⁵

Documentary Evidence

Another relatively simple method of visual presentation is to enlarge and project documentary evidence onto a screen highlighting the important parts so the audience can read the key sections. Statistics can be displayed in the form of graphs or charts and are much more persuasive in this format than when they are read.⁶

Computer Generated Animations

What happened versus what should have happened can be shown with computer animation. It can also be used to display different viewpoints of the subject and to include hypothetical variants.⁷

Next time there is the need to communicate a complex concept, a visual tool may be the way to clearly convey the message.

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Footnotes

¹Kellerer, Michael. “An Infographic Lesson for Litigators,” Cogent Legal Blog, October 21, 2013, <http://cogentlegal.com/blog/2013/10/infographics-lessons-civil-war/>

²Kutza, Patricia. “The Wow Factor: YouTube Helps Lawyers Create with Infographics,” Law Technology News, September 30, 2013, <http://www.law.com/jsp/lawtechnologynews/PubArticleLTN.jsp?id=1202621374225&slreturn=20131015110102>

³Vaughan, Pamela. “How to Create an Infographic in an Hour or Less [5 Free PPT Templates],” Hubspot Inbound Marketing, August 29, 2013, at: <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/free-ppt-infographic-templates-designs-ht>

⁴Sommers, Frank and Dan Roam. “Winning Your Case Using Visual Grammar,” 40 *Litigation* 18 (Fall 2013) also available at: <http://www.litigationjournal-digital.org/litigationjournal/fall-2013?folio=18#pg19>

⁵Transcript of Record at 4803, U.S. v. Philip Morris USA, 449 F. Supp. 2d 1 (D.D.C. 2006) (No. 99-2496) as quoted in “Techno-Jury: Techniques in Verbal and Visual Persuasion” 54 *New York Law School Review* 245 (2009/2010).

⁶Morse, Gregory J. “Techno-Jury: Techniques in Verbal and Visual Persuasion” 54 *New York Law School Review* 249-250 (2009-2010).

⁷Selback, John. “Digital Litigation: The Prejudicial Effects of Computer-Generated Animation in the Courtroom” 9 *Berkley Technology Law Journal* 338 (1994)